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Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda
Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Implementation of the UNECE Statistical Programme 2014

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Report of the Rosstat/EFTA/UNECE High-level Workshop on Modernization of official Statistics

Summary

The State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (ROSSTAT), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), jointly organized a High-level Workshop on "Modernization of Official Statistics" which took place on 10-12 June 2014 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation, with the financial support of the Russian Federation and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

The objective of the workshop was to discuss, with the Heads of national statistical organizations and senior staff with responsibility for statistical infrastructure, the standards needed to support statistical modernization activities, and advise them on how to implement those standards in practice.

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I. Summary of the meeting

1. The State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (ROSSTAT), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), jointly organized a High-level Workshop on "Modernization of Official Statistics" on 10-12 June 2014 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation, with the financial support of the Russian Federation and EFTA.

2. The objective of the workshop was to discuss, with the Heads of national statistical organisations and senior staff with responsibility for statistical infrastructure, the standards needed to support statistical modernization activities, and advise them on how to implement those standards in practice.

3. The workshop was attended by participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) were also represented.

4. The workshop was opened by Mr. Georgy Oksenoyt, Deputy Head of ROSSTAT. Opening addresses were also given by Mr. Valery Shantsev, Deputy Governor of Nizhniy Novgorod, Ms. Valentina Nikiforova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation, Mr. Gabriel Gamez, UNECE Regional Advisor in Statistics, and Mr. Steven Vale, Chief of Statistical Management and Modernization Unit, both from the UNECE Statistical Division. All speakers highlighted the importance of modernisation activities to maintain the relevance of official statistics.

5. The agenda contained the following substantive topics:

(a) Standards and Tools for the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services;

(b) Standards for Data and Metadata Transmission and Documentation;

(c) Implementation of Standards and Tools in CIS countries and Mongolia: Taking Stock and the Way Forward.

II. Conclusions and next steps

6. The main points highlighted during the workshop included:

(a) Many of the countries present are already using some of the standards needed to support statistical modernization, particularly the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM);

(b) The importance of harmonization across different domains of statistics was stressed;

(c) Statistical modernization is not just an information technology issue, it needs to be addressed at the strategic level, including in strategic plans;

(d) User needs should be taken into account in modernization activities;

(e) It is important to motivate staff to accept change and to practice good communication;

(f) Micro-data access remains a challenge. It is difficult to harmonize the rules regarding confidentiality protection as these depend on national legislation which varies between countries;

(g) In some cases, changes to organizational structures within statistical offices are needed to support modernization activities;

(h) The difficulties of recruiting and retaining staff with the right competencies for working in a modernized statistical environment were stressed. Common training activities could help;

(i) It is important to convince governments that investment in statistical modernization is essential to ensure high quality statistics;

(j) Support from international donors can help, as long as this is fully aligned with the strategic development plan of an organization;

(k) Global Assessments of national statistical systems help to identify priority areas for modernisation activities;

(l) The need to apply international standards can be a good argument when requesting government funding for modernization;

(m) Censuses often provide opportunities for investments in new processes, methodologies and tools, which should be designed for re-use in other statistical activities;

(n) In reality, modernization needs to be opportunistic, taking small steps whenever the opportunity arises, to reach a longer-term goal;

(o) Territorial (sub-national) statistical offices should be fully included in modernisation activities as they will be strongly affected by the outcomes;

(p) Modernization is not a one-off activity; it is a continuous process which should be incorporated in strategic plans.

7. Proposals for follow-up activities included:

(a) More training, particularly at the expert level. This could include workshops, training of trainers (who will then train colleagues within their organizations), provision of on-line training materials, etc.

(b) Informal networking will be important to share ideas and experiences. Support from international organizations to facilitate this would be welcome;

(c) Ensuring that important documents relating to modernisation and standards are available in Russian.

8. All documents and presentations for the meeting are available on the website of the UNECE Statistical Division: http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2014.06.modernization.html.